

11-17-1869

Letter from Sarah Whitney, Belmont,  
Massachusetts, to Anne Whitney, Rome, Italy, 1869  
November 17

Sarah Whitney

Wellesley College Archives

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Belmont Nov. 17. '69.

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"In the name of the prophet figs!" wh. being interpreted means, I know not what - but something strong I trust, & fitting for a preamble to the replies I wd make to the solemn adjurations of my beloved - because, you see, I don't like to swear in Christian phraseology when the words of outside Barbarians will serve as well. Firstly then, the connection in my mind between Miss C's illness & her return to the stage was as legitimate as possible - both facts coming to my ear at the same time - the first, to be sure, being the only one that came through that reliable medium, the newspaper, but the other being overruled by persons whose I thought had a right to know the truth, when they said that her fortune was not sufficient for the needs of herself & relatives who lean upon her. Secondly, my dear Anne, it was perhaps, because I shrank a point for "mercy's sake" that I didn't "do the proper thing" & "give the bride a picture". But lest you sh'd call me mystical, I must explain. You see if in this art-loving age, every one of a bride's dear thousand friends sh'd resolve to eschew the vulgarity of silver & plated ware & dish, & give to her in sweet remembrance of her joy, & in token of their sympathy with it, an unframed picture, said bride, being poor in this world's goods, might find her gifts oppressive & less of a "joy forever" than the friends purposed. My own personal bestowment upon the most worthy maiden had ~~been~~ as deep a draft upon my resources as I thought the occasion warranted - but, said I to myself



if Carrie sh<sup>d</sup> think there is any thing in my port-  
folio that will give her nice pleasure as coming  
from a friend thousands of miles away, I sh<sup>d</sup> like  
to have the thing done & done with. Whether Carrie  
was too modest to choose the best as I desired, or  
whether she thought it w<sup>ld</sup> be my gift & not y<sup>r</sup>s &  
therefore not acceptable, I know not - I only know  
she refused my request & you may bring some little  
complete thing if it comes in y<sup>r</sup> way, or leave it behind  
my best beloved Nanny as you think best & I will not say  
that you do not "want to do the proper thing always".

And now what next does the dear word that came  
with the wonderful old promptness on Mon. night suggest  
Some things wh. I am so sure you will find in the letters that  
have preceded this, that I shall not now stop to say <sup>them</sup> again.

I think I sh<sup>d</sup> approve the change in the Beggars' mask if I  
knew what it is - but that's of no consequence as you may think  
& as I know - Since you like the new better than the old &  
find it truer to y<sup>r</sup> own highest idea I am excellently well  
pleased & trust the best critics will be. By the way a  
correspondent of the Tribune in Paris signs himself C.C.  
& I wonder if that good-natured, far-seeing "child"  
among y<sup>e</sup> taken notes" whom we remember on this side

The newspapers that you had looked for in vain after  
y<sup>r</sup> arrival in Rome <sup>likely to</sup> come you know only in reply to  
y<sup>r</sup> request. Edw<sup>d</sup> promised to send the Advertiser & I trust  
it arrives now in due time with its interesting reports of  
Life at the Hab. Rebecca Buffum says that it ~~is~~  
~~times~~ makes her very mad to read how glibbed these  
sometimes are - but I doubt if any other paper is fairer.  
I scarcely see it oftener than once a week & then I  
find more interesting matter in it than in a whole  
week of "Journals". Mr Weiss' lectures are made

very attractive by their abstracts of them - but  
they <sup>lectures</sup> are too far off for me to attend - & indeed  
going from Belmont to Boston for any entertainment  
is rather costly business - so much time has to be consumed.  
Last Sat. I had a ticket to see Booth, but did not  
use it, being laid on the shelf that day with one of  
my superb colds; & now he is gone. The week however  
had given me two good things in a visit from Katy  
& a visit to her. In the latter I met Mary Hudson  
who sent to you much love. The 5-weeks stay wh. she  
& Nanny made in Saratoga failed to cure their ailments  
though it gave them a good deal of pleasure. Asan  
made his appearance on Mon. evng, 12 hours or more  
earlier than we had expected, looking wonderfully  
well. She has had a pleasant time, but prefers Belmont  
to Brooklyn & Boston to N. York. I am glad to have  
her help in the Thanksgiving preparations wh. must  
be made, whether few or many come to the feast.  
This is a stormy day for the returning wanderers  
wh. will perhaps make tomorrow's brightness more  
appreciated.

I think I told you of Dr Hooker's death. As the funeral  
was advertised to be in the church, I went at an  
early hour & by request of Luther Parker whom I met  
there, I took my seat in our old pew & watched for  
nearly an hour before the service commenced the  
constant stream of persons who passed in at one  
door & out the other, merely to look once more upon  
the life like face of their old friend. The disease



(of the heart) I suppose, prevented the usual pallor  
of death & he looked as though sleeping. ~~The service~~  
~~was in the~~ In the 2 1/2 hours I spent in the church, memory  
was very busy peopling every pew with faces <sup>very often on the lips</sup> & to  
be seen in the throng that crowded the aisle for more than  
a half hour after the service was finished. Doors were closed,  
bells tolled & flags placed at half mast - & every face  
testified to the real heart-felt sorrow. I went home  
with Mary Parmelee & brought away her & Leggie's &  
Helen's love for you. They hear every week from Mrs  
McGaw (?) whom they think you may see in Rome  
this winter.

Sun. 2<sup>nd</sup> That is a wise question Dr. Blackwell  
puts to her patients - for if it does not draw out  
the answer that may generally be inferred, it may  
a directly opposite one wh. I find to be the cause  
of a good deal of prevailing suffering - But then  
what can the Dr do, when the cause of the disease  
is overwork? Perhaps as much as when it is idleness.  
Fate or Providence seems disposed to make humanity  
of the feminine kind work out its salvation through  
some thinking wh. it is slow to do. Our little neighbor  
Payson rose in my estimation yesterday when she  
brought me the loveliest of bouquets made of  
rose buds, violets, Stasia & the most exquisite of  
Maiden-hair ferns - Why I was so honored, I  
cannot comprehend unless it is because I am  
the sister of my sister. Both families move  
into Boston this week, not apparently because city  
pleasures tempt them, but because for some reasons  
it is more convenient to live there; & because the  
Miss finds Boston streets more favorable to foot & non-  
locomotion than those of the country. Oil painting



of his engagement to Annie Lombard. The young  
men, as firmly as ever, are losing their child-  
hoodness but not their real beauty. I grieve that  
their business requires the close confinement it does  
for they don't inherit the constitution to sustain it.  
Their poor Mother seems likely to lose all the good  
effects of her N. H. life through that advice of Alston's.  
Once inhaling the ether, her digestion has been all wrong  
though I did get a more cheering word through Miss Dawn.  
I met some of the Carrolls at the concert who said  
that Ch. is settled at housekeeping in Dresden where  
Mrs. C. finds the help question about as disturbing  
as on this side - & here it is becoming a vital one.  
If Mrs. Pierce & her coadjutors establish cooperative  
housekeeping on a comfortable & enduring basis  
they will become the idols of perplexed & weary womanhood.  
Blessings on forlorn old Katy, a cross & protracted dis-  
pensation though she be, I have to say to myself  
when I hear the recital of my neighbors' miseries.  
Mrs. Shannon says enough is wasted in these kitchen  
& support some of the hotels she has tried in  
Europe - I fancy both the Nays wouldn't be sorry  
to find themselves back in a hotel on the other  
side. They have already been through the ordeal of  
to cook including the good Nays who staid faithfully  
at the post through all their absence, but haven't  
yet. I saw the old ~~year~~ <sup>year</sup> for the first time  
at 12 o'clock is a cheering sight for the Add-  
I saw the old ~~year~~ <sup>year</sup> for the first time



Since the snow maiden was published & wished  
anew, to little purpose I fear that Addy did have  
a share in the profits. D. says it is more popular  
than he expected it would be. A lady in Cambridge  
wants Mr. D's copy & thus, he says the refusal of it,  
though he has not yet decided that he will sell it.  
He wants to know what ~~she~~ is doing now, having  
an eye to art if not to business - but yr. servant  
didn't enlighten him. I think I am an  
ignoramus also in regard to the worth of jewelry,  
& stand ready for all theoretical & practical  
enlightenment. My pretty bird buttons had  
to go to the jeweler to be repaired & I was  
then told that the setting of such was apt  
to be flimsy. These did not look so - but I find  
at this moment while writing the word, that  
the mending availed so little that the little  
diamond ring <sup>forming a part of the setting</sup> that came off before, is probably  
hopelessly gone. I am very sorry for it added  
a good deal to the beauty & I had paid so lately  
\$1.50 to Bevilow Brothers & Co. to have them set so  
strong! I shall have to base the unsuitability  
of my wearing them on something beside their  
beauty. It is a shame if they are sold so  
low that there should be any haggling about  
the price. I did see in looking into the  
show case of B. Brothers & K. that there  
were more costly articles for sale, but  
mine are pretty enough let them cost much

or little, & I confess to an enjoyment in wearing  
them.

Another earthquake is reported on yr. side.  
The storm that it was said some professor on  
this side had predicted for the 1st week in  
Nov. didn't come off, & I breathe more freely.  
A fine display of the Aurora B - last Sun-  
night was the nearest approach to it. Carrie  
promised us a storm in 24 or 48 hours after  
that, but the finest week of many followed.  
So I mean to disregard the prophets.

Geo. Horne Sr. died last night - the  
friends of the family rejoice & they themselves  
cannot mourn. He has for a long time been  
a sad spectacle of death in life & a terrible  
drain upon the vitality of his family. We  
so earnestly hope that they may be spared  
more suffering.

I fear my paper is as thin as yr. & my ink  
is not so black. I think it is hard to write  
upon such paper, but I find no difficulty in  
reading yr. letters when written on both sides  
when you use ink of good color. Don't shorten  
the letters for fear of my eyes. You may have  
regard to yr. own strength & I will not  
ask you to write to yr. own weariness.  
You never need fear that home eyes or  
ears will ever be weary with whatever  
may come to them over the signature

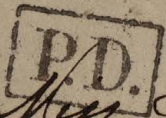


of either A.

Mon. evng. 6<sup>th</sup> Carrie & I have had a pleasant time at the Club, where <sup>we</sup> went to hear Wm. Craft talk - You know he was the man whom Mr. Parker remarrried at the time of the fugitive slave bill excitement - giving into his hands at the time a Bible & a sword & advising him to use the latter for the protection of his wife's freedom. Mr. P. & other friends succeeded in effecting the escape of Crafts & his wife to Eng. whence they were sent out to Dahomy to establish a traffic between that country & Eng. that shd help to drive the people from the slave trade. He is an exceedingly pleasant looking & intelligent negro & gave a very interesting account of the Dahomeans & his reception by them. His wife is a good looking malatto, so light that I shd not have mistrusted the coloured saint. They are both so dignified & so modest, it was a great pleasure to meet them & a greater, remembering Mr. Parker's interest in them. The paper to night tells us that the friends of Miss Lewis are to give her a reception in some church & make her some presents preparatory to her departure for Rome. If the Roman club shd do the same thing I wd try to be present. The paper also tells us that Dr. Hooker died on Sat. It is good to hear that he has found the rest he longed for. I rec'd to night a note from Mrs. Page acknowledging the tooth powder I sent some weeks ago - She says that her Aunt has gone back to Brooklyn - but nothing about the trip to Europe - & I infer that she will not go at present. I am sorry for all the disappointments that comes of her failure to go.

Winter is pouring upon us - the clothes & day freeze upon the lines & snow 4 inches in depth is reported in Virginia & N. Carolina. Is not the world turned topsy-turvy? A loving good night to the friends in Misty, Bad-Rome from all the Belmonts home.

Sept. 12  
- 27



Mrs Anne Whitney

Care Messrs Freeborn & Co  
Rome

With Mr. Scole's  
compliments

Italy



